

# CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A computer-implemented method for providing access to functions of a portable information appliance, comprising:
  - while the portable information appliance is operating in a configuration mode, converting input signals from a microphone to a first data set representing a voice of an authorized user and storing the first data set in the portable information appliance; and
  - while the portable information appliance is operating in a standby mode, converting input signals from the microphone to a second data set representing sound detected at the microphone, and if the first data set matches the second data set, providing access to functions of the portable information appliance.
2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
  - automatically placing the portable information appliance into an operations mode if the first data set matches the second data set; and
  - while the portable information appliance is operating in the operations mode, converting input signals from the microphone to a third data set representing sound detected at the microphone and storing the third data set for subsequent playback.
3. The method of claim 2, further comprising:
  - comparing the third data set to each of a plurality of recorder-command data sets, wherein each of the recorder-command data sets is associated with a sound recorder function performed by the portable information appliance; and
  - performing the sound recorder function associated with a recorder-command data set that matches the third data set.
4. The method of claim 2, further comprising automatically returning the portable information appliance to the standby mode after a selected period of inactivity.
5. The method of claim 2, further comprising returning the portable information appliance to the standby mode in response to a user input signal.

1 6. The method of claim 1, further comprising  
2 while the portable information appliance is operating in the configuration mode,  
3 converting input signals from a microphone to a plurality of first data sets representing  
4 voices of a plurality of authorized users and storing the plurality of first data sets in the  
5 portable information appliance; and  
6 if any of the plurality of first data sets matches the second data set, providing  
7 access to functions of the portable information appliance.

1 7. The method of claim 1, further comprising automatically placing the portable  
2 information appliance in the standby mode when power is initially applied to the  
3 appliance.

1 8. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
2 entering a program-button mode in response to a selected user input signal while  
3 the portable information appliance is operating in the operations mode;  
4 associating a user-specified set of functions with a user-selected programmable  
5 button while the portable information appliance is operating in the program-button mode;  
6 and  
7 performing the set of user-specified functions associated with a programmable  
8 button in response to a user selection of the programmable button while the portable  
9 information appliance is operating in the operations mode.

1 9. The method of claim 4, further comprising automatically placing the appliance in a  
2 power saving mode after a second selected period of inactivity.  
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1 10. A system for providing access to functions of a portable information appliance, the  
2 system comprising:  
3 means for converting input signals from a microphone to a first data set  
4 representing a voice of an authorized user and storing the first data set in the portable  
5 information appliance, while the portable information appliance is operating in a  
6 configuration mode; and

means for converting input signals from the microphone to a second data set representing sound detected at the microphone and, if the first data set matches the second data set, means for accessing the functions of the portable information appliance, while the portable information appliance is operating in a standby mode.

11. A computer-implemented method for providing access to functions of a portable information appliance, comprising:

while the portable information appliance is operating in a configuration mode, converting input signals from a biometric module to a first data set representing a biometric characteristic of an authorized user and storing the first data set in the portable information appliance; and

while the portable information appliance is operating in a standby mode, converting input signals from the biometric module to a second data set representing the biometric characteristic detected at the biometric module, and if the first data set matches the second data set, providing access to functions of the portable information appliance.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein the biometric module includes a fingerprint sensing pad adapted to convert the input signals into a data set representing the biometric characteristic of the authorized user.

13. The method of claim 11, wherein the biometric module includes a retinal scanning device adapted to convert the input signals into a data set representing the biometric characteristic of the authorized user.

14. The method of claim 11, wherein the biometric module includes a microphone and a digital signal processor that interface with a memory arrangement to recognize a voice of the user.

15. A system for providing access to functions of a portable information appliance, comprising:

means for converting input signals from a biometric module to a first data set representing a biometric characteristic of an authorized user and storing the first data set in

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the portable information appliance, while the portable information appliance is operating in a configuration mode; and

means for converting input signals from the biometric module to a second data set representing the biometric characteristic detected at the biometric module, and if the first data set matches the second data set, means for accessing the functions of the portable information appliance, while the portable information appliance is operating in a standby mode.